The Umayyads | Christian Subjects under Umayyad Rule

‘Christian communities remained prosperous and artisans continued to produce numerous artefacts.’

The conquest of the Middle-Eastern region that arches across the northern part of the Syrian Desert and extends to the Nile Valley encompassing the Tigris and Euphrates rivers – in modern times known as the Fertile Crescent – was undertaken in the name of Islam. The period of Umayyad rule that followed brought fewer changes for the Christian population than is popularly thought, for while Muslim communities were concentrated in the cities and in newly established towns as a military elite, the Christians continued to live in small towns and in the countryside and were not excluded from government posts. Christian communities remained prosperous and artisans continued to produce numerous artefacts such as lamps, for both religious and secular use; Christian imagery appears on many of them. Few churches went out of use. The three-aisled basilica church was the most commonly seen and, as might be expected, churches in towns were usually more sumptuous than those in rural areas. Many churches of the era are famous for their beautiful floor mosaics.



Name:
Lamp and base

Dynasty:
Hegira 1st–2nd century / AD 7th–8th century Umayyad

Details:
Jordan Archaeological Museum
Amman, Jordan

Justification:
The Christian motif of a fish indicates that this lamp was used within the Christian community.



Name:
Church of the Virgin Mary: mosaic floor

Dynasty:
End of the 6th century–beginning of 7th century AD; renovated in hegira 149 / AD 767 Byzantine–Umayyad–Abbasid

Details:
Madaba, Jordan

Justification:
The inscription on this mosaic floor suggests that the Greek language continued to be used by the Christian community during the Umayyad period.



Name:
Church of St Stephen

Dynasty:
Hegira 99–138 / AD 718– 56 Umayyad–Abbasid

Details:
Umm al-Rasas, Jordan

Justification:
A mosaic floor that was defaced by iconoclasts who rejected figurative representations; the depictions of cities, however were left untouched.



Name:
Church of the Nativity

Dynasty:
AD 529 Byzantine

Details:
Bethlehem, Palestine*

Justification:
One of the most famous sites of Christian pilgrimage in Palestine, the Church of the Nativity has been in continuous use throughout several Islamic periods.



Name:
Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Dynasty:
The first construction AD 326-335. The present construction inaugurated in AH 543 / AD 1149 The church dates back to the Byzantine period but several renovations were implemented in subsequent periods

Details:
Jerusalem

Justification:
According to Christian belief Jesus was buried in this church which continued to be used throughout all the Islamic periods.
